

Pointers for Reviewing Each Other's Syllabi

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The purpose of this exercise is to allow a faculty member to receive feedback on his or her syllabus and to see if this important document accurately reflects the course. Break into groups of 4 or 5 people.

1) THINKING ABOUT YOUR COURSE: look over the "Syllabus Checklist." What issues are applicable to your course? What ideas do you get from the checklist?

2) READ EACH OTHER'S SYLLABI: In your group, exchange syllabi and, individually, spend about 10-15 minutes total SILENTLY reading and reviewing syllabi. As you read another person's syllabus, note questions and possible suggestions.
Think about:

Do you, *as a teacher*, see any concerns with this course (class management, work load, timing of assignments, etc...)?

Do you, *as a student*, see any concerns with this course (work load, timing of assignments, etc...)? As a student, is everything clear? Do you have any questions?

Are the learning goals clear?

Do the specific assignments support the goals for the course? Do these assignments work well with and build off of each other?

Do the skills that these assignments develop match the skills that are evaluated to determine the grades of the students? (For example, having a series of informal quizzes throughout the term might not prepare students to write a big final paper that counts significantly toward their grade.)

Are there multiple opportunities, both un-graded and graded, for students to receive *timely* feedback?

3) TAKE TURNS PRESENTING YOUR SYLLABUS: For *two or three minutes* talk about the course: Tell people, quickly: Have you taught it before? How comfortable are you with the material being taught? How large is the class? What are the challenges of the course (for the instructor and students)? How do these shape the structure of the course? What are your concerns? AND THEN . . .

DISCUSS THE SYLLABUS AND THE COURSE AS A GROUP, with readers taking turns asking questions. Count on 15-20 minutes of discussion for each syllabus.

4) REPEAT STEP 3 for EACH Participant, until all participants have received feedback.

OTHER NOTES (for me)

Strive for CLARITY.

Be as STRICT as you need to be: it is easier to move in the direction of getting less strict and more laid-back than to tighten things up once.

Clearly spell out policies and concerns: Do you have clear policies for late work, making up work, attendance, participation?

What are your teaching “pet peeves”? Students arriving late? Wearing baseball caps or eating in the classroom? Do you need to mention these on your syllabus, or is there another (often more effective?) way of conveying this to students?

Other things to consider: What do you want the students to call you? What do you call your students?

CHUNKING—no narrative, but telling a story

Matching activities to learning goals

discipline/level

Think about the level of your course, how its contents are shaped by

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